



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

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by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**

We're back! The Saltwater Review will be published bi-weekly until December 5, 2008 this year. The next issue of the Virginia Saltwater Review will be published October 24<sup>th</sup>.

During the past three weeks, members of VMRC's Fisheries Management and Law Enforcement Division's have been hard at work at the State Fair of Virginia, and their efforts were rewarded with a 2008 Director's Choice Ribbon. To find out more about the VMRC display, go to: <http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/statefair/2008/index.shtm>

Frequent readers will notice that there are fewer reporting sites in this issue, as some of our fishing report contributors have closed for the season. However, there are still fish to be found, whether you are after striped bass, flounder, or some offshore action.

## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

At Captain Bob's, flounder began to pick up last weekend. The best areas were in the Chincoteague Channel from the Coast Guard Base south to adjacent Beebee Road. One angler had a very unusual catch for Chincoteague—he landed a 19-inch black sea bass and 23-inch red drum from the north side of Queen's Sound. Puffers are being caught around Markers 22 and 23 along with a few snapper bluefish and dogfish. Striped bass are doing well at the bridges at night and in the surf. Triggerfish have been found at the wrecks along with black sea bass. Offshore, a catch and release blue marlin citation was reported, and wahoo are being caught in the canyons.

### **Cape Charles**

This week, staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle reported speckled trout, red drum, and flounder citations. A 7-pound, 1-ounce speckled trout was caught at Smith Island, and a 5-pound, 5-ounce speckled trout was landed from

Hungars Creek. Several red drum release citations have been earned from the barrier island surf, and citation flounder were caught at Buoys 38 and 36 and at the Cabbage Patch. Small striped bass were found at the rock piles of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

### **Wachapreague**

At Captain Zed's, offshore boats reported success with dolphin, yellowfin tuna, and numerous wahoo with a few citations. Some flounder and croaker were reported, along with a few kingfish landed from the Cedar Island beach. Overall, inshore fishing has been a little slow.

### **Onancock**

Fishing for striped bass was slow this weekend out of Onancock. Some anglers are catching nice speckled trout in the evening along the edges of the Pocomoke Sound. Nice red drum have been reported. A lot of small bluefish are feeding on minnows in the area. Captain Wil hopes that cool temperatures will bring in the usual fall fish.

### **Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel**

It was a great fishing weekend at Sunset Boating Center. Anglers caught numerous striped bass at the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel, and spot could be had over the tube in the same area. The striped bass were between 18 and 27 inches in length. At the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, a 23-inch flounder was reported as well.

At Salt Ponds Marina, spot and medium-sized striped bass were reported this week.

Staff at the York River Fishing Center reported no citations this week. A few anglers have been fishing striped bass and have found plenty of action with spot, bluefish, and grey trout. Some striped bass have been found in grassy areas. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) have been caught in the area as well.

Dr. Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Spot are also being caught at the MMBT, Twin Stakes, inside Rudee Inlet, and in the Rappahannock River. Speckled trout and puppy drum are becoming more active as the waters cool. Both are being caught inside Rudee and Lynnhaven Inlets, on Poquoson Flats, inside Back River, around Goodwin Island, and inside the bayside creeks of the Eastern Shore. Flounder fishing has been slow but has shown signs of picking back up as some nice catches have been made at the 36A area and some big flounder have been caught at the CBBT. Some of those doormats have been caught by anglers live-baiting for striped bass over the tubes. That is a nice by-catch. Small stripers are being caught in the shallows by anglers targeting speckled trout and puppy drum. Any dock with a light on it is a good place to find them at night. Most anglers targeting are fishing the HRBT, MMBT, and the CBBT. A bit larger class of fish are being caught by anglers chunking bunker or live-bating at the bridge tunnels. Small bluefish are everywhere. You can find them under working birds or just go fishing for striped bass and you will catch plenty. Grey trout are making their best showing of the year. Most are small but some nice ones have been caught at the HRBT and inside Rudee Inlet. Sea mullet are making their fall run and are plentiful in the lower bay and along the oceanfront. Anglers fishing from the pier at Sandbridge are catching some big red drum. Even better are the kayak anglers who have been getting out further than the pier. Those guys have been catching a lot of big drum each day they can get out.

The coastal wrecks are holding sea bass, triggerfish and some larger bluefish. An occasional sheepshead is also a possibility on the near-shore structures. There should be king mackerel and false albacore around those wrecks as well. The Tower Reef and Santore are usually good October spots for both kings and Alberts. Spadefish are still around these areas but they are very skittish this time of year and catching them on hook-and-line is a challenge. Spear fishermen are still getting them. Jacks are still a possibility at the Chesapeake Light Tower and some of the nearby wrecks. In general, offshore fishing is very good. It has been mixed though. Boats fishing out of Oregon Inlet have either done great or not and it seems to change day to day. Most boats are finding some dolphin. The tuna have been the hit or miss. Some days it is fantastic and boats are coming in with their limits of yellowfin tuna. There are plenty of blackfin around and some bigeyes. Off of Virginia, there has been good water in the area of the Norfolk Canyon to the Washington Canyon and fishing has been very good. Yellowfin tuna have not been numerous but those caught are in the 40-70 pound range. Bailing a limit of dolphin has not been a challenge. Wahoo are being caught in impressive numbers with some boats coming in with ten or more. Good numbers of white marlin and some blue marlin are still around. Overnight boats are coming back with swordfish, some pushing 200 pounds and there have been a couple of daytime swords caught. Some bigeye tuna are being encountered around the Norfolk Canyon where a 305 pound beast was caught this past weekend. Offshore bottom fishermen are catching grouper, wreckfish, blueline tiles (some close to the 20 pound mark), and a variety of other critters. Every week there is a record something being caught out there.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

With an overdue break in the weather this past week; many anglers took advantage of the window of opportunity before the next front rolls through. Most were rewarded with worthwhile catches.

The main event is the outward migration of flounder as they gather to leave the bay. Anglers are experiencing good catches drifting along channel edges in the lower bay. Several citation doormats are coming from the buoy 36 and 38A areas drifting with cut bait, as well as the CBBT proper with live bait. Captain Steve Wray's party aboard the Ocean Pearl boated a nice 9lb, 10oz flattie while live-baiting structure near the first island of the CBBT this week. Both inshore and offshore wrecks are also holding flounder.

The striped bass season debuted in the bay this week. Although it is early in the season, anglers targeting striped bass are finding some success casting to schoolies ranging up to 28-inches around the structure of the lower Bay Bridge Tunnels, especially at night. Plenty of bluefish are also in the mix. Those testing live bait over the tubes are focusing on rockfish to about 10-pounds.

Spot chasers are keeping busy with nice sized fish while awaiting the run of the big yellowbellies. Anglers are picking up nice keepers from the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, Ocean View, Rudee and Lynnhaven Inlets, and the lower bay rivers. Big croaker are thrilling hardhead anglers all over the lower bay. Nice fish are coming from the bayside inlets, the HRBT, and the CBBT. Tautog action is turning on in the bay, where keeper fish took sand fleas and crab off the structure of the CBBT this week.

Puppy drum are still going strong within the lower bay shallows, flats, and inlets where anglers are experiencing solid action on cut bait and lures. Pups are also making a showing around the CBBT. Keeper sized speckled trout are available in the same areas for casters, with the Eastern Shore bayside creeks providing the best run of big fish. Larger specks also made their debut in the Elizabeth River.

Both Rudee and Lynnhaven Inlets are producing lots of keepers, with a few big fish in the mix. Cecil Groves of Virginia Beach tricked a nice 6lb, 3oz speck with a Mirrolure while fishing in Lynnhaven Inlet. Pan-sized grey trout are also hitting within the lower bay inlets and at the CBBT.

To the dismay of cobia hunters, few catches have been reported lately. Danny Davis of Portsmouth released a surprise citation cobia while fishing for triggerfish on a wreck near the Chesapeake Light Tower this week. Schools of big red drum are ravaging pods of bunker along the coast from Sandbridge down to False Cape. Anglers are finding plenty of red action by casting into the schools. Kayakers are also getting in on the fun. Damien Hall of Chesapeake released a 46-inch red while fishing from his kayak off Sandbridge. Pier anglers are having some luck with big reds from the Little Island Fishing Pier, while surf anglers are pulling fish to over 50-inches out of the wash south of the pier. No reports of king mackerel are surfacing lately, but hopefully that will change with the easterly winds this weekend. Those trolling at the Chesapeake Light Tower can expect small false albacore, snake kings, and some Spanish mackerel.

Deep droppers had some decent hauls of big blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and grouper this week with the decent weather. The Rudee Angler's first 36-hour deep dropping trip for 2008 out of the Virginia Beach Fishing Center returned with stringers full of tilefish, seabass, grouper, blackbelly rosefish, and barrelfish. Five of the barrelfish were contenders for world record consideration, with the largest tipping the scales at 20lbs, 15oz.

Offshore anglers are experiencing very good wahoo action, and lots of bailer and gaffer sized dolphin. The few tuna coming in are big. A blue or white marlin hookup is also a possibility. Sword fishing is becoming popular, as overnights are becoming more common. The new state-leading sword came from an overnight trip aboard the Wave Runner, tipping the scales at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center at 190 pounds.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Staff at Jett's Hardware reports that striped bass are being caught by chumming near the some of the reefs and Smith Point Bar. While no large ones have been reported yet, the fishing remains productive. For those looking for other fare, bluefish and spot were in the area as well, with the spot just starting to reach that prized yellow belly class.

Captain Jim Thompson reported that the first week of the month started out with a bang, and the fish were numerous at Whitestone and at the Spike at the mouth of the Rappahannock. The spot were large, and the trout were 18 to 20 inches in length. A few big mullet were along for the ride as well. Catching the right tide was the trick for successful fishing. While the Rappahannock River was productive this week, the Piankatank River was not. Butlers Hole and Windmill Bar were slow for bottom fish. The bluefish were still around, and striped bass were moving in, as some were caught and released at Whitestone.

### **Virginia Beach**

Offshore fishing was productive this weekend from the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. Dolphin, swordfish, and citation-sized blueline tilefish were landed this weekend. Sunday, charter boats were successful with wahoo (several citations) and two swordfish. All were caught at the Norfolk canyon. Inshore fishing was slower with

puppy drum (juvenile red drum), spot, and flounder in the inlet.

According to Paula at Fisherman's Wharf Marina, plenty of dolphin and wahoo were biting offshore. A few billfish were also caught. At the Norfolk Canyon, there were rumors of yellowfin tuna catches. Inshore, spot and speckled trout were found in the inlet.

### **Virginia Piers**

Staff at the Ocean View Pier report catches of spot using bloodworms. This Sunday, a 55-pound red drum was caught at the end of the pier using cut bait.

Despite crowds on the pier, very little has been caught at the Lynnhaven Pier. Staff reports that fishing has been slow this week.

Spot, sea mullet, and bluefish were reported from the Virginia Beach Fishing Pier. Overall, pier fishing has been slow.

At the Sandbridge Pier, slow fishing was reported. Catches included spot, croaker, and a few red drum.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

With the first "fallish" feeling cold fronts of the year coming through, water temperatures are starting drop to around 70 degrees. While fishing has been hit and miss, the fish should start schooling up soon and provide more consistent action (possibly with the next front due later this week).

Out of the Nags Head area, anglers making the long runs offshore have been rewarded with yellowfin and blackfin tuna, dolphin, wahoo, king mackerel, tilefish, amberjack, sea bass, and snappers. Billfish were noticeably absent this week. Midrange fishing has dropped as well with only a few striped bass being found. Close to shore, and just outside the surf, spot and croaker were the dominant catches. Pier fishermen and surf fishermen were catching the same fish as well as sea mullet, pompano, red drum, black drum, and trout working inside the breakers. The inlets and bays have slowed down somewhat, with speckled trout and red drum catches around the Melvin Daniels Bridge and the Washington Baum Bridge.

South of Oregon Inlet, surf fishermen have been seen improved fishing over the course of the weekend. Ramps 43 and 44 were the hotspots for bluefish, Spanish mackerel, blow toads (aka puffers) and red drum. Sunday morning saw the first bluefish blitz of the season with bait fish being thick in the area. South beaches were having luck with sea mullet, pompano and a few flounder thrown in as well. North of Cape Hatteras Point, two large cobia weighing more than 70 pounds were caught.

Offshore fishermen out of Hatteras Inlet saw limits of dolphin as well as king mackerel, wahoo and blackfin tuna. Inshore anglers were finding puppy drum (juvenile red drum) and bluefish.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's [THE SALTWATER REVIEW](http://mrc.virginia.gov/swr/saltwaterreview.shtm) as the source of the fishing information.

# Get Hooked!

## Report at

[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's Recreational Fishing Online Reporting website. The header includes the commission's name and logo. The main content area has a blue background with the text 'Recreational Saltwater Fishing' and 'Welcome Jgrist'. There are two main sections: 'Red Drum Reports are Needed!' and 'New 2008 Tautog Regs'. The 'Red Drum' section mentions collecting length data for a stock assessment. The 'Tautog Regs' section lists the closed season (May 1 through June 24), minimum size limit (14 inches), and possession limit (4 per person). A sidebar on the left shows statistics for June 16, 2008: 1,457 members, 295 trips, and 3,941 catches. At the bottom, there are links for 'Related Links' and 'Help'.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and

type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

# ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!








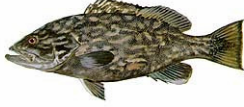



## THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....  
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*You catch it, you fillet it,*

**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:**

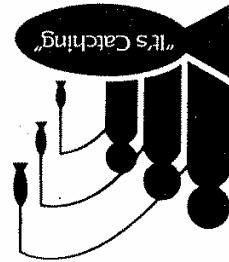
**Bell Isle Marine (Hampton) Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)  
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*Practice*

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**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

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